

as an Israeli spy, and incarcerated for 17 months. He was subjected to harsh interrogation techniques, and received no treatment for a debilitating case of glaucoma.

Despite public pledges from senior Bangladeshi Government officials that all pending legal action against Mr. Choudhury would be dropped, the government pressed forward on its prosecution of Choudhury for sedition. Mr. Choudhury won PEN USA's "Freedom to Write Award," and was presented with the American Jewish Committee's prestigious "Moral Courage Award" in absentia in Washington, DC. Mr. Choudhury's newspaper offices were bombed by Islamic extremists in July, and he was attacked by a mob in his office on October 5. Then a judge with alleged ties to an Islamic extremist group ruled that Mr. Choudhury must stand trial for sedition.

For his message of moderation and interfaith dialogue, Shoaib Choudhury is facing unjust criminal charges in an effort to silence him. Congress must send a clear message: we cannot allow moderate voices in the Muslim world to be silenced.

The resolution I introduce today calls on the Government of Bangladesh to drop all charges against Shoaib Choudhury, return his passport and possessions, and end his harassment. I want to thank Congresswoman NITA LOWEY for being the lead cosponsor of this legislation. I look forward to working with her and my other colleagues on this important human rights initiative.

IN RECOGNITION OF LORAIN KEHL ON HER RETIREMENT FROM THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**HON. VERNON J. EHLERS**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 16, 2007*

Mr. EHLERS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to my longtime executive assistant and scheduler, Loraine Kehl, who is retiring on February 6 after 22 years of service to this House of Representatives and the citizens of the Third Congressional District of Michigan, which I represent.

Loraine was an original staff member dating back to when I took office on Dec. 7, 1993. Prior to working for me, she served in her same capacities for my predecessor, the late Paul Henry, throughout most of his tenure in the House, dating back to 1985. Prior to working for Congressman Henry, she also worked briefly for the House Budget Committee. In her time with me, she has been my indispensable, right-hand person. She keeps me on schedule, makes sure all the bills are paid and the trains run on time. Though it should go without saying, she will be greatly and deeply missed.

Given her 22 years of service to our district, it is no surprise that she is well known and beloved among the people of Grand Rapids and West Michigan and the many other people who have done business with our office. She has been a fixture in our front office, greeting old friends and newcomers alike, offering assistance in getting White House tours and providing advice for visitors to Washington. She is deeply appreciated by my constituents for her helpful assistance, her impeccable memory for

names and faces and her consistent concern for the needs of those who call or visit. In a very real way, she has been the public face for our Washington office for more than the past two decades.

Madam Speaker, I hope that you and the rest of our colleagues will join me in wishing Loraine Kehl a very happy and fulfilling retirement.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. SANDER M. LEVIN**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 16, 2007*

Mr. LEVIN. Madam Speaker, last Friday, I was unavoidably absent during rollcalls 22 and 23. Had I been present, I would have voted "nay" on rollcall 22, the motion to recommit H.R. 4 with instructions. I would have voted "yea" on rollcall 23, final passage of H.R. 4, the Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act of 2007.

SUPPORT FOR THE SAFE COMMISSION

**HON. FRANK R. WOLF**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, January 16, 2007*

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, today I reintroduced legislation in the House of Representatives aimed at addressing the looming financial crisis facing the Nation, the Securing America's Future Economy (SAFE) Commission Act. The bill would establish a national bipartisan commission that will put everything—entitlement spending as well as all other Federal programs and our Nation's tax policies—on the table and require Congress to vote up or down on its recommendations in their entirety, similar to the process set in 1988 to close military bases. Mandating congressional action on the panel's recommendations is what differentiates this commission from previous ones.

Support for the bill is coming from both sides of the aisle. I submit for the RECORD an op-ed by former Senators Bob Kerrey and Warren Rudman that ran in the Washington Post, an op-ed by former Congressman Tim Penny that ran in the Washington Times, columns by David Broder and Robert Samuelson, and editorials from the Dallas Morning News, and the Orlando Sentinel on the topic of entitlement reform.

This legislation will be good for the future of America.

[From the Washington Post, Aug. 28, 2006]

SECURING FUTURE FISCAL HEALTH

[By Bob Kerrey and Warren B. Rudman]

The economic and moral case for long-term reform of fiscal policy is clear. Yet politicians refuse to act. If this stalemate persists, it could end in catastrophe.

Over the next 30 years, spending on federal programs is on track to go up by 50 percent as a share of the economy. If revenues remain at their historical level, the resulting deficits will approach 20 percent of gross domestic product by 2036—almost 10 times the current size. The debt will surge to 200 percent of GDP—twice what it was at the end of World War II.

Political realities explain why nothing has been done about this. Changing course would require substantial spending cuts from projected levels or equivalent tax increases. Neither party wants to be the first to propose these tough choices out of fear that the other side would attack it. Similarly, neither side wants to discuss possible compromises of its own priorities, out of fear that the other side will take the concessions and run. Unfortunately, these fears are justified.

Since the regular legislative process seems incapable of dealing with the impending crisis, some alternative has to be found. President Bush has suggested a commission. Having served on many commissions, we understand their potential value. We also understand how they can go wrong. In our view, a new commission could be very useful, but only if it recognizes fiscal and political realities. It needs five elements to succeed.

First, it has to be truly bipartisan. Any perception that the commission's purpose is to facilitate swift enactment of a partisan agenda would doom it to failure. It must have bipartisan co-chairs and equal representation. Doing otherwise in the current partisan environment would be a waste of time and money.

Second, it must have a broad mandate. While it is critical to control the growth of entitlements, particularly Medicare and Social Security, the commission should examine all aspects of fiscal policy.

Third, all options must be on the table. If either side sets conditions, the other won't participate. Republicans cannot take tax increases off the table, and Democrats cannot take benefit reductions off the table.

Fourth, the commission needs to engage the public in a genuine dialogue about the trade-offs inherent in realistic solutions. When people are armed with the facts and given the opportunity for honest dialogue, they are willing to set priorities and make hard choices.

Fifth, the commission's recommendations should be given an up-or-down vote in Congress, allowing for amendments that would not reduce the total savings. Absent that, the report would likely join many others on a shelf.

Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.) and Sen. George Voinovich (R-Ohio) have put forward a proposal that satisfies most of these elements. They would create a bipartisan commission with a broad mandate to examine long-term fiscal challenges. All policy options would be on the table. The commission would solicit input from the public and develop legislation that Congress and the president would be required to act on. Its work would address four key concerns: the unsustainable gap between projected spending and revenue, the need to increase national savings, the implications of foreign ownership of U.S. government debt and the lack of emphasis on long-term planning in the budget process.

A commission with these attributes could give all parties the political cover they need to tackle the tough choices and develop a bipartisan consensus for solutions. This would be invaluable regardless of who controls Congress or the White House.

In the end, of course, elected representatives, not a commission, will have to make the hard decisions. But a commission that produced solutions with meaningful bipartisan support would provide a catalyst for action. If Congress were required to vote on the commission's recommendations, opponents would be challenged to produce solutions of their own.

Advocates of extending tax cuts would be challenged to say how they would restrain spending enough to avoid cascading debt once the baby boomers begin to retire in